

VZCZCXRO4938
PP RUEHPA
DE RUEHBP #0599/01 1791147
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 271147Z JUN 08
FM AMEMBASSY BAMAKO
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9363
INFO RUEHAS/AMEMBASSY ALGIERS PRIORITY 0450
RUEHNM/AMEMBASSY NIAMEY PRIORITY 0319
RUEHNC/AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT PRIORITY 0281
RHMFISS/COMSOCEUR VAHINGEN GE PRIORITY
RHMFISS/HQ USAFRICOM STUTTGART GE PRIORITY
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RHMFISS/HQ USEUCOM VAHINGEN GE PRIORITY
RUEHZK/ECOWAS COLLECTIVE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAMAKO 000599

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/23/2018

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#)

SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR'S FAREWELL CALL ON A DISCOURAGED
MINISTER OF TERRITORIAL ADMINISTRATION

REF: ALGIERS 725

Classified By: Ambassador Terence P. McCulley, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (C) Summary: The Ambassador's June 20 farewell call on the Minister of Territorial Administration found General Kafougouna Kone upbeat about the Mali-U.S. relationship, but discouraged on prospects for peace in northern Mali. Kone, who is extraordinarily close to President Amadou Toumani Toure, defended the Government of Mali's (GOM) application of the Algiers Accords to date. He showed little enthusiasm for a more robust standing up of Special Mixed Units to secure the north of Mali, citing the unhappy experience of the Kidal unit commander's desertion. Speaking on issues ranging from the death of two Tuareg alliance members in Kidal to the proliferation of Tuareg factions, the Minister said his previous confidence about prospects for peace in northern Mali had turned decidedly less optimistic. He noted that Mali did not intend to send representatives to the ongoing talks in Algiers until the Algerians had succeeded in unifying the various factions to present a cohesive interlocuteur. The Ambassador responded that recent GOM efforts to highlight its activism on the Algiers Accords was useful in countering propaganda from rebel factions, but that the eventual participation of loyal Tuareg elements in securing the north was essential to a successful, peaceful outcome. End summary.

12. (C) Minister Kone was effusive in his praise for advances in U.S.-Malian relations during the Ambassador's tenure, citing in particular bilateral military training and "discreet involvement" by the U.S. in northern issues. While the situation in the north sometimes lent itself to glimpses of hope, he had been distressed that the positive development of international donors' participation in the Kidal Forum had been undone by Bahanga's "senseless acts" that undermined the stability required for development. Kone was sanguine about Algerian pique over Libyan involvement in the liberation of military hostages, saying the detention of the nation's sons obviously provoked a wish to involve any friendly country in their safe return. On issues of northern security and border control, he made a barbed comment familiar from ATT's talking points to the effect that if Algeria could not control its border, Mali's prospects for doing so were even slimmer, but in the end welcomed Algeria's return to a negotiating role.

13. (C) On the deaths of two ADC members in Kidal, General Kone began by regretting a mass departure of Alliance members from Kidal after the event, in particular because they had blamed the Army. Kone recalled that the GOM had made statements condemning the act and launched a commission of inquiry, and observed that it was "not the Army's habit to assassinate people." Kone stated that the position of the

spent cartridges near the bodies seemed to be more arranged than random, leading him to suspect that the bodies had been planted near the Army base. He regretted that the relatives of the deceased had been permitted to take the bodies for burial, since the gesture of the Army organizing a funeral would have been a positive one. The Ambassador agreed that a transparent and open government inquiry into the matter was essential.

14. (C) Kone claimed that of the 18 identified tasks required of either the GOM or the ADC by the Algiers accords, the Government had fulfilled all but three of theirs. Both sides had agreed that a provisional regional assembly had been overtaken by events; the National Pact's call for tax relief in the north was in the form of a draft law currently under review with the Minister of Finance; and there had been progress on socio-economic reinsertion, with a budget in place and current and projected training for 400 total new recruits to the Army. On the latter point, there was also a group with representatives from Gao and Kidal reviewing proposed projects with support from UNDP. The Ambassador agreed that Bahanga's side had engaged in considerable propaganda about the state of Algiers Accords implementation, but there were legitimate concerns about the operational status of the Special Units. In the ensuing exchange, Minister Kone stressed the "bad taste" that the desertion of inaugural Kidal Special Unit Commander Fagaga had left for the GOM. The Ambassador agreed that it was problematic but not impossible to find trustworthy Tuareg military members, citing the ADC military who had worked with the Malian army during the siege at Tinzouaten, and added that Tuaregs feel

BAMAKO 00000599 002 OF 002

strongly about the need to participate in northern security. He reiterated USG willingness to explore extending training to the Special Units once they had been reenergized under trustworthy leadership. Kone recalled that the ADC call for lightened military presence in the north actually exceeded the premises of the Algiers Accords, which in fact discussed withdrawing only surge forces that had gone to Kidal in the wake of the 23 May 2006 uprising. He saw this action conditioned on the rebels returning arms stolen from the military. The Ambassador encouraged the GOM to continue their public relations strategy to highlight the true status of Algiers accords commitments and their fulfillment.

15. (C) Regarding the ongoing discussions in Algeria and the apparent reunification of Tuareg factions, the Ambassador asked Kone if he thought the talks were promising for a restored northern peace. He replied that the past confidence had been undermined by Bahanga's senseless acts, repeated as recently as the May 21 attack at Abebeira, and the recent proliferation of factions implying lack of consensus. Kone said that the GOM would first give the Algerians the chance to get the parties to unify before sending a negotiator, but that in the end those Tuaregs who believe in the promise of the Algiers Accords should agree to move forward, since Mali firmly views the Accords as the legal underpinnings for resolving Mali's northern problem. He mused aloud about the difficult decision of how to handle a Bahanga who had engaged in laying mines and working with traffickers. Whether to fight him or to talk to him depended a great deal on the decisions Bahanga makes, as well.

16. (C) Comment: Kone's clear wariness of the Special Units is perhaps understandable given the bitter recent experience of betrayal. Participation in ensuring the security of their region, however, is a hugely significant issue for the Tuareg. We will continue our campaign with senior GOM leadership to stress the importance of making the leap of faith to draw in Tuareg regulars who have proven their loyalty to date.

MCCULLEY